



STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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DHS Focus on Mental Health & Disabilities

DES MOINES, Iowa – Department of Human Service experts on mental health and disabilities are urging Iowans to examine myths about mental illness and other disabilities to recognize that treatment is both available and effective. May is national Mental Health Month.

Bill Gardam, administrator of the Mental Health and Disability Services division of DHS, said that approximately 26 percent of Americans over age 18 (National Institute of Health) and 20 percent of children under age 18 (Center for Disease Control) will suffer from a mental health disorder in any given year.

"Though mental illness is quite common in our society, it is widely misunderstood. Many myths about mental illness persist, such as the myth that people with mental illness are likely to be violent. In truth, the risk of violence among the mentally ill is small, as they are more often victims of violence than perpetrators of it," Gardam said.

He also said many people fear that a mental illness diagnosis is hopeless.

"Today's treatment is highly effective and recovery is indeed possible – even people with the most serious mental illnesses and/or other disabilities can lead active, productive lives. Iowa is working to reform its public mental health and disabilities services system into one that includes more and better treatment options and focuses on individuals and their paths to resiliency and recovery. Ultimately, the goal of the services system is to support Iowans of all ages who have mental health disorders and/or other disabilities to live, learn, work, and recreate in the communities of their choice," he said.

To learn more about services or get help, contact one of Iowa's local community mental health centers and other accredited facilities located across the state (<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/mhdd/docs/MHDDAccreditedProviders.pdf>) or advocacy groups (<http://www.iowaofficeofconsumeraffairs.com/>).

More information is available at the DHS Division of Mental Health and Disability Services web site <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/mhdd/index.html>

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